taken in the previous meetings between the Home Secretaries and the Joint Working Group oh Border Management and agreed to strengthen the on-going cooperation between concerned agencies of the two countries with the objective of combating terrorism, smuggling and other criminal activities across the India-Nepal border. They also agreed to prevent the use of their respective territories for activities directed against the other side.

The SAARC convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, signed during the 11th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu from January 4—6, 2002, provides a framework for co-operation to prevent trafficking in women and children for prostitution. In addition, regional workshops are organized regularly to enhance cross-border co-operation to prevent human trafficking.

(d) Does not arise.

Withdrawing Pakistan from Most Favoured Nations List

1232. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:' Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering withdrawing Pakistan from its list of "Most Favoured Nations" and using the Indus Water Treaty to its advantage as a possible response to Pakistan's continued support to terrorism; and

(b) if so, what are the facts of the case and Government's views on the subject?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Following the December 13 attack on the Parliament, Government took several measures considered necessary and effective to highlight the need for Pakistan to end support to cross-border terrorism and infiltration. These included the decision to recall the Indian High Commissioner from Islamabad; terminate the services of Samjhauta Express and the Delhi-Lahore bus service with effect from 1st January, 2002; reduce the strength of the respective High Commissions in the two countries by 50%; restrict the movement of

those officials and family members who stayed back to the municipal limits of Delhi and suspension of all overflight facilities available to Pakistan or Pakistan Airlines with effect from 1st January, 2002. India has also handed over to Pakistan a list of 20 fugitives from law with the request that they be apprehended and handed over to India.

Government remains firmly committed to countering the threat of cross border terrorism and to preserving India's security.

Pendency of Applications at Regional Passport Office, Ahmedabad

1233. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Regional Passport Office at Ahmedabad is finding it extremely difficult to clear the pending passport applications resulting in harassment of the passport seekers;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to redress the problem;

(c) whether Government are consistently receiving request for opening of passport offices at Surat and Rajkot in Gujarat; and

(d) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) The Government is aware that the Regional Passport Office at Ahmedabad has a substantial pendency of passport applications.

(b) The volume of applications received in Passport office Ahmedabad has increased substantially. In 1999 the number of applications received by RPO Ahmedabad was 1,70,541 which rose to 1,89,776 in 2000 and to 2,35,811 in 2001. The Government is dealing with the increasing volume of work by a greater degree of computerisation, introduction of machine writing of passports and transferring additional staff from other Passport Offices to Ahmedabad.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) It has been decided to open a Passport Office at Surat. Staff